

Testimony of Wes Wilson, "Be the Change - USA" in support of HB 13-1275. April 11, 2013

Be the Change strongly endorses HB 13-1275. This bill would provide an analysis of existing epidemiological data to ascertain if residents near extensive natural gas and oil production are adversely harmed by the industry's air and water toxic emissions. The academic study to be authorized by this bill would rely on hospital and county records normally taken by these institutions which focuses on disease and birth defects but not on the adverse consequences of ambient chemical exposures.

In 2011, toxic and deadly hydrogen sulfide gas was found being emitted from 78 Noble Energy oil wells in Weld County. Noble Energy waited 8 months to report that. H<sub>2</sub>S is of course is deadly and toxic. We know that oil and gas drilling accidents such as this one in 2011 in Weld County are indeed toxic trespass on us citizens -- at least we know that if these accidents are emitting acutely toxic substances such as H<sub>2</sub>S. What is needed is an understanding of whether the industry's allowed and permitted-compliant but never-the-less toxic air emission trespass is also harmful to residents. This bill is an excellent beginning to obtain that understanding.

Last year two scientifically peer-reviewed studies, one by the Colo. School of Public Health and another by Dr. Theo Colborn of the Endocrine Disruptor Exchange, showed that the industry's toxic trespass also occurs when no violations of the CDPHE air emission rules are involved. What Dr. Lisa McKensie and her colleague Dr. Adgate showed was that the concentrations of numerous non-methane hydrocarbons released during fracking and drilling operations would result in increased cancers and other adverse health risks including low birth weight infants. These toxic emissions were from CDPHE-compliant wells.

Anecdotally, Colorado citizens and citizens across the Nation living in concentrated oil and gas drilling areas are reporting nose bleeds, vomiting, and peripheral neuropathy and other non-lethal consequences they believe are due to toxic air emissions emanating from drilling and production in their communities. The legislature, the state and we citizens need to know how common and where these citizen complaints originate and then compare that same information with the proposed control communities where oil and gas production are not taking place.

Therefore, this bill could be strengthened by putting 'boots on the ground' to conduct health surveys of citizens in drilling areas. Such voluntary health surveys have been conducted previously, for example, by Dr. Wilma Subra of Subra and Associates, located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Consider also that in the 1980s, academic institutions were able to identify high blood levels in children living near refineries and highways. Similarly, by mapping the locations of Colorado citizens reporting frequent nose bleeds and other health consequences could lead to identification of unhealthy hotspots. That information in turn could result in the imposition by CDPHE of strict and enforceable toxic gas emissions limits that provide for public health, safety and welfare.